

Message Text

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TAGS: OREP (KENNEDY, EDWARD M)

SUBJ: CODEL KENNEDY'S VISIT TO IRAN MAY 26-30

REF: TEHRAN 4580 AND PREVIOUS

1. ALTHOUGH CODEL KENNEDY'S VISIT TO IRAN MAY 26-30 WAS BILLED AS PRIVATE, ENTIRE GROUP WAS GUEST OF IMPERIAL COURT AND GOI WHICH TREATED SENATOR AS IF THEY BELIEVED RECENT OPINION POLLS SHOWING HIM TO BE FRONT-RUNNER FOR PRESIDENCY. THEY PROVIDED IRAN AIR 727 FOR TRAVEL WITHIN IRAN, POLICE ESCORT USUALLY OFFERED ONLY TO VISITING HEADS OF GOVERNMENT, ARRANGED AUDIENCE WITH SHAH AND APPOINTMENTS WITH ALL TOP GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, AND PROVIDED ROOMS AT BEST HOTELS IN TEHRAN AND ISFAHAN AND LAVISH HOSPITALITY FOR ALL 12 MEMBERS OF PARTY.

2. AFTER ARRIVAL FROM IRAQ MAY 26 AND LUNCH HOSTED BY COURT MINISTER, SENATOR MET WITH FONMIN KHALATBARY, MIN ECON & FINANCE ANSARY, MIN INTERIOR AND OPEC REP AMOUZEGAR, AND MIN COMMERCE MAHDAVI. AT SENATOR'S REQUEST, ONLY MR HUNTER ACCOMPANIED HIM ON MOST CALLS. MAY 27 WAS HECTIC 16-HOUR DAY WHICH STARTED WITH WORKING BREAKFAST FOR EDITORIAL WRITERS AND INCLUDED 80-MINUTE AUDIENCE WITH SHAH, MEETINGS WITH PRIMIN HOVEYDA, MINISTER OF

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STATE FOR PLAN & BUDGET MAJIDI, AND TEHRAN UNIV CHANCELLOR

NAHAVANDI, LUNCH WITH SIX SENATORS, SPEECH AT TEHRAN UNIV TO 400 STUDENTS, FACULTY AND MEMBERS OF DIPLOMATIC CORPS, OFF-THE-RECORD SESSION WITH GROUP OF 30 "REPRESENTATIVE" STUDENTS (ACTUALLY SENATOR HAD TWO SUCH MEETINGS BECAUSE OF MISUNDERSTANDING ABOUT HOW STUDENTS WOULD BE SELECTED), AND Q AND A SESSION WITH MEMBERS OF AMERICAN COMMUNITY. DAY ENDED WITH DINNER AT AMB ZAHEDI'S HOUSE HOSTED BY HIS DAUGHTER, PRINCESS MAHNAZ, TO WHICH THE CREAM OF IRANIAN ESTABLISHMENT WAS INVITED.

3. FOLLOWING TWO DAYS WERE LARGELY DEVOTED TO SIGHTSEEING IN MASHAD, ISFAHAN, PERSEPOLIS AND SHIRAZ, OVERFLIGHT OF STRAIT OF HORMOZ AND PERSIAN GULF COAST, AND, AFTER RETURN TO TEHRAN, AMBASSADOR'S DINNER FOR CODEL. MORNING OF DEPARTURE, MAY 30, STARTED WITH TV INTERVIEW OF SENATOR AND INCLUDED VISITS TO QUEEN-MOTHER'S CENTER FOR HANDICAPPED CHILDREN, CROWN JEWELS AND TEHRAN'S MOST MODERN HOSPITAL CENTER. SENATOR HELD Q AND A WITH PRESS AT AIRPORT IMMEDIATELY BEFORE DEPARTURE FOR ISRAEL AT 12:30.

4. BASIC THEMES WHICH SENATOR CONSTANTLY STRESSED IN MEETINGS WITH OFFICIALS AND IN HIS TALKS WITH PRESS AND PUBLIC WERE DANGERS OF UNCONTROLLED ARMS RACE IN MIDEAST AND NEED FOR GREATER INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO REDRESS ECONOMIC INEQUITIES AND RESOLVE PROBLEMS RELATED TO ENERGY AND FOOD. HE ALSO TOUCHED LIGHTLY ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES AND NEED FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING ON PART OF OIL PRODUCERS OF ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES FACING US AND OTHER INDUSTRIALIZED STATES AS RESULT OF SUDDEN CHANGE IN TERMS OF TRADE. SENATOR WAS GREETED ENTHUSIASTICALLY WHEREVER HE WENT AND PRESS ACCORDED WIDE AND PROMINENT COVERAGE TO HIS PUBLIC REMARKS. ONLY UNFAVORABLE PRESS ITEM WAS AMIR TAHERI ARTICLE IN KAYHAN CRITICIZING SENATOR'S OBJECTIONS TO IRAN'S MILITARY EXPANSION AND MODERNIZATION.

5. COMMENT: THIS WAS SENATOR'S FIRST VISIT TO IRAN. IT GAVE HIM, AND PARTICULARLY HIS FOREIGN POLICY ADVISOR HUNTER, EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO EVALUATE SITUATION AS IT REALLY IS AND TO BALANCE SOME OF NEGATIVE IMPRESSIONS ABOUT IRAN THEY APPEARED TO BRING WITH THEM.
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